

Message Text

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44

ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 NSA-02 OMB-01 TRSE-00 AID-20 CIAE-00

PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03 NSC-10 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01

SPC-03 SS-20 USIA-15 EB-11 DRC-01 /127 W

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R 261135Z DEC 73

FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9267

INFO SECDEF WASHDC

JCS

CINCPAC

USSAG

13TH ADVON

13TH AF CLARK AB

17 AIR DIV UTAPAO

ARSUPTHAI

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SECDEF FOR ISA

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: MARR, TH

SUBJECT: RTG FOREIGN MINISTRY DENIES PRESS REPORT ON SOFA

1. SUMMARY: THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS IS QUOTED IN THE BANGKOK PRESS AS SAYING THAT NEGOTIATION OF A STATUS OF FORCES AGREEMENT (SOFA) TO COVER US FORCES IN THAILAND IS "IMPOS-SIBLE" AND CONTRARY TO "THE PRESENT TREND" AND "CURRENT THINKING."

2. THE ENGLISH-LANGUAGE DAILY NATION QUERIED THE MFA ON PROSPECTS FOR A SOFA ON THE BASIS OF AN "INTELLIGENCE" ITEM IN THE CURRENT FAR EASTERN ECONOMIC REVIEW ALLEGING THAT AMBASSADOR KINTNER WOULD SEEK A SOFA TO MEET PENTAGON DESIRES. THE STORY HAS NOT OTHERWISE BEEN REPLAYED HERE.

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3. THE FULL TEXT OF THE NATION DECEMBER 24 ARTICLE, CONTAINING THE FOREIGN MINISTRY RESPONSE, READS AS FOLLOWS:

'STATUS OF FORCES' REPORT PUZZLES FOREIGN MINISTRY
THE FOREIGN MINISTRY WAS PUZZLED YESTERDAY OVER A REPORT IN THE FAR EASTERN ECONOMIC REVIEW (DEC 24 ISSUE) WHICH SAID THAT AMERICAN AMBASSADOR TO THAILAND, MR. WILLIAM KINTNER, WILL TRY TO RENEW US EFFORTS TO NEGOTIATE A "STATUS OF FORCES" AGREEMENT WITH THE THAI.

"IMPOSSIBLE," ONE HIGHRANKING SOURCE SAID. "IT IS SIMPLY AGAINST THE CURRENT THINKING HERE."

THE REVIEW SAID THE THAIS HAVE SHUNNED SUCH AN AGREEMENT IN THE PAST, "NOT WISHING TO FURTHER FORMALISE THEIR SUPPORT OF THE AMERICAN MILITARY PRESENCE."

THE REPORT, CARRIED UNDER THE "INTELLIGENCE" COLUMN, ADDED: "AS WITH OTHER NATIONS WHERE US FORCES ARE STATIONED, THE PENTAGON WANTS TO HAVE A FIRM UNDERSTANDING ON SERVICEMEN'S RIGHTS."

THE FOREIGN MINISTRY DISMISSED THIS REPORT AS BASELESS. "THIS ISSUE HAS NOT COME UP SINCE THE HEIGHT OF THE VIETNAM WAR A FEW YEARS AGO WHEN NEGOTIATIONS ON THE MATTER WERE DROPPED," THE SOURCE SAID.

"THE PRESENT TREND," HE SAID, "IS AGAINST SUCH A POSSIBILITY." HE WAS OBVIOUSLY REFERRING TO THE CURRENT TALKS FOR THE PHASEDOWN OF AMERICAN FORCES FROM THAILAND.

4. THE FAR EASTERN ECONOMIC REVIEW PARAGRAPH, SIMILAR TO A NEWSWEEK "PERISCOPE" ITEM, READS:

DIPLOMATIC TIGHTROPE
ONE OF THE FIRST PRIORITIES OF THE RECENTLY-ARRIVED AMERICAN AMBASSADOR TO THAILAND, WILLIAM KINTNER, IS TO RENEW US EFFORTS TO NEGOTIATE A "STATUS OF FORCES" AGREEMENT WITH THE THAIS. SUCH TREATIES DETAIL AND LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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REGULARISE CONDITIONS UNDER WHICH LOCAL LAW APPLIES TO US SERVICEMEN. THE THAIS HAVE SHUNNED SUCH AN AGREEMENT IN THE PAST, NOT WISHING TO FURTHER FORMALISE THEIR SUPPORT OF THE AMERICAN MILITARY PRESENCE. AS WITH OTHER NATIONS WHERE US FORCES ARE STATIONED, THE PENTAGON WANTS TO HAVE A FIRM UNDERSTANDING ON SERVICEMEN'S RIGHTS.

5. COMMENT: THE REPORTED MFA COMMENTS COINCIDE WITH EMBASSY

ESTIMATES OF RTG ATTITUDES TOWARD REOPENING THE QUESTION OF
A SOFA HERE. THE EMBASSY HAS NOT RAISED THE SUBJECT WITH THE THAI
RECENTLY AND HAS NO PLANS TO DO SO, BUT THE QUESTION IS RAISED
WITH US OCCASIONALLY BY AMERICANS CONCERNED BY THE LACK OF
WRITTEN AGREEMENTS FOR THE AMERICAN MILITARY FORCES IN THAILAND.
KINTNER

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